



1for3 News

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A WINTER HEALTH CAMP SERVES PATIENTS IN AIDA AND AL-AZZA CAMPS



In Palestine, December can be a time for renewed health. A five-day winter camp last month served sixty people who are patients in the community health project Health for Palestine. This was a chance for the patients to be together, to spend time with their caregivers outside the context of weekly visits, and to build community knowledge and strength. “Children’s summer camps have been a hallmark of Lajee’s activities for a generation. Creating opportunities for older people, especially women, to gather for fun and learning constitutes a new sustained commitment that allows 1for3 and Lajee to engage and serve multiple generations. It also recognizes the tremendous contributions this generation makes to family and community wellbeing,” commented 1for3 director Nidal Al-Azraq.

Health and Environment Director Shatha Al-Azza and the community health workers led the activities. The camp included lectures by the Red Crescent and doctors who are specialists in a variety of topics of concern to patients, including thyroid, bone, and eye health. A nutritionist also visited, and a presentation offered a space for discussion of menopause. Participants played quiz games in which they showed off their knowledge about health issues. They learned about healthier alternatives to existing treats from a local chef who showcased her baking. Participants enjoyed downtime on the beautiful Lajee rooftop with the hydroponic garden. On the final day,



the women of the group took a bus trip to Hebron to enjoy the Turkish baths there. While youth regularly enjoy such outings, this was a chance for older women to take in the views from the bus and to take over the *tabla* drum to sing their songs along the way.

Rasmia Mustafa Abu Shuayra reflected, “The best thing about the camp was the treatment and care we received from the young men and women who are the community health workers. We benefited in a lot of ways – how to deal with house fires, how to think about nutrition in new ways, how to plant new vegetables. And we enjoyed the trip to the Turkish baths in Hebron. We had a lot of fun! It was a wonderful change of pace.”

Shatha Al-Azza saw this camp as a bridge toward her goals for 2022, commenting, “We are here because of the families in the camp. I hope that all of the efforts we have made in 2021 will be reflected in the lives of the beneficiaries in 2022.”

AN ENVIRONMENTAL & HEALTH BAZAAR ENLIVENS AIDA CAMP

On October 31, 2021, Lajee Center held its second Health and Environment Bazaar. Woman participants in the Health and Environment programs, small farmers from neighboring villages, health professionals, and other vendors set up over twenty booths on the soccer field to share food, crafts, and information with residents of Aida Camp, refugees from other Bethlehem-area camps, and other city residents. They also enjoyed cultural performances.



It was a fun day, but it also served at least two important purposes. As Lajee Center director Mohammad Al-Azza said, “The goal of the bazaar is to encourage people to buy local produce and goods and to

boycott Israeli goods. We also sought to give an opportunity for young people and families from the camp who have something to sell that might produce an income, even if a modest one. Times are difficult in the camp, in particular because of the COVID crisis and high rates of unemployment.”



Patients in the health program shared the produce from the Lajee hydroponic garden, which they help to tend, as well as produce from their own small gardens. Small farmers or *fellaheen* from nearby villages including Battir, Beit Jala, Al-Walaja, and Al-Khader

sold fresh produce as well as pickles, grape molasses or *dibis*, jams, olives, olive oil, and olive oil soap. People also offered

their baked goods for sale. Fida Abu Khadija of Aida participated in the bazaar by selling flowers. She explained, “It was a good opportunity to have my flowers seen by new people. It was a very beautiful and exciting activity, and hopefully it will be repeated.” In addition to food and agricultural products, the bazaar showcased Palestinian heritage items including jewelry, glass from Hebron, and traditional embroidery, as well as *henna* hand decorations. Visitors could get their photos taken, too.



Cultural performances spanned generations, including youth performances from the Lajee Center musical ensemble, the Shoruq *dabka* dance troupe from Dheisheh Camp, and a group of older women singing traditional songs. Children enjoyed performances from a Palestinian circus troupe, a trampoline, and clowns. Visitors could also receive health checks for blood pressure and diabetes, and booths offered information about breast cancer, nutrition, and more. Commented Health and Environment director Shatha Al-Azza, “The idea from this bazaar is to strengthen the steadfastness of the *fellaheen* and refugees and to encourage the resistance economy.” Hopefully it will be repeated.



ISRAELI MILITARY ATTACKS CONTINUE TO THREATEN AIDA CAMP'S RESIDENTS

The Israeli military continues incursions into Aida Camp both during the day and at night. In one daytime incursion late last year, two families were impacted by a barrage of tear gas. One tear gas canister broke the window of Lajee Center director Mohammad Al-Azza's home. Al-Azza recalled that his parents and his three-year-old niece had been in his home when the tear gas canister broke their window (pictured) and started burning their floor, flooding their house with gas. Relatives nearby were able to bring gas masks and help them evacuate. Even after cleaning the area over and over, the smell of gas stayed for over a week. On the same day, a tear gas canister broke a window in a small cleaning goods store operated by Anwar Al-Azraq, Nidal Al-Azraq's brother, who has lived with disabilities his entire life. The burning of cleaning chemicals was especially dangerous and damaging for those nearby. Commented 1for3 director Nidal Al-Azraq, “My brother's store is immediately next to my mother's window. We were extremely lucky her window was closed.” A few days after the attack, Al-Azza's mother was taken to the hospital with an inflammation in her chest, and she has continued to require treatment in the new year. Al-Azza commented, “The situation in the camp is nothing new. It is the same situation. There may be fewer conflicts during the day, because there are many young people already in prison or injured. The army comes into the camp in the middle of the night for arrests. Most of the daytime invasions are for training new occupation units.” Al-Azraq remarked, “These attacks threaten Aida's residents day and night, generation after generation. There will be no solution and no safety until the occupation ends, but we must maintain community resilience in the meantime.”



...UNFORTUNATELY, THIS STORY DOES NOT END HERE...ON JANUARY 18, 1FOR3 & LAJEE'S HYDROPONICS GARDEN AND PRESCHOOL PLAYGROUND WERE DAMAGED IN A BARRAGE OF ISRAELI TEAR GAS. STAY TUNED FOR A FULL REPORT.